

The Friends of Amasango
(hereinafter referred to as ‘the Charity’)
Registered Charity No 1116268

**Policy for
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
(CHILD PROTECTION)**

1 Key people

The Chairman of the Charity’s board of trustees: *Mr. Ian Irvin.*

The holder of the DBS check data about trustees and volunteers: *Mr. Brian Wakeham.*

The supervisor of the approval and induction of new volunteers going out to work at the Amasango School:
Currently vacant.

The charity’s Child Protection Officer: *Mr. Martin Coombs.*

The Principal of the Amasango Career School, who looks after volunteers whilst they are working out in South Africa: *Mrs. Linda Ngamlana*

2 Background

The Charity is a UK based Christian charity that works to advance the education of extrinsically handicapped and severely marginalised street children in South Africa and in particular those associated with the Amasango Career School in Grahamstown (‘The School’). The Charity works to fund facilities not provided by the Eastern Cape provincial government and to recruit volunteers to the school as part of the holistic support to the children that enables them to learn. The protection and support of vulnerable children is thus at the core of the Charity’s existence and purpose.

This Safeguarding Children Policy Statement refers only to the activities of the UK-based Charity and not to the school in Grahamstown, which works under the child protection policy of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, South Africa. As far as the UK Charity is concerned, children may be involved directly during fund-raising activities here in the UK. However, volunteers travelling out to South Africa to help for a time at the Amasango Career School also need to be prepared for the situations and policies that they will meet there. The Charity is not responsible for these volunteers during their journeys and their time in South Africa, but it does help to prepare them for the experience and will use reasonable endeavours to see that they comply with the rules and procedures of the school. Advice for such volunteers will be attached to this document as an appendix as and when it becomes available.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

3 Statement of intent

3A The Charity fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect any children in its care. There are three main elements to the Charity’s Safeguarding Children Policy:

1. **Prevention** – a positive atmosphere, careful and vigilant supervision of activities, and providing good adult role models.
2. **Protection** –
 - i. operating safe recruitment procedures (eg. appropriate DBS checks)
 - ii. following agreed procedures, endeavouring to see that trustees and volunteers are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns.

3. **Support** – to children who may have been abused or are at risk of being abused.

3B The Charity’s Safeguarding Children (child protection) written policy aims to:

- safeguard and promote the health and safety of any children involved in its activities.
- provide clear direction to volunteers and others about expected codes of behaviour in dealing with child protection issues.
- make explicit its commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures.
- ensure that child protection concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child.
- use reasonable endeavours to see that volunteers operating in South Africa do so in accordance with the Amasango School rules.

4 Transparency

4A The Charity will never ignore an allegation of child abuse and will always investigate any concerns thoroughly. Open communications are essential. Safeguarding children is the responsibility of all adults and especially those working with children. The Charity aims to work consistently and appropriately with child protection agencies.

4B As the Charity could be responsible for fund-raising activities anywhere in the UK, it is not possible to give a single local authority social services department to contact in case of any concerns. However, it should be noted that such worries should be raised with the social services department of the local authority where the activity was taking place. In particular, if there are any concerns about a trustee, volunteer or other adult involved in the running of an activity, the person to contact is the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) within that social services department.

5 What is child abuse?

5A The NSPCC defines child abuse as: “the term used when an adult harms a child or a young person under the age of 18.”

5B Abuse is always wrong and it is never the young person’s fault. Child abuse can take a variety of forms, any or all of which can cause long term damage to a child:

- physical abuse,
- emotional abuse,
- neglect
- child sexual abuse.
- bullying and domestic violence are also forms of child abuse.

5C A child may be experiencing abuse if he or she is:

- Frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed
- Left in unsafe situations, or without medical attention
- Constantly “put down,” insulted, sworn at or humiliated
- Fearful of parents or carers
- Severely bruised or injured
- Displays sexual behaviour which doesn’t seem appropriate for his/her age
- Growing up in a home where there is domestic violence
- Living with parents or carers involved in drug or alcohol use, which impact negatively on the child’s welfare/well being.

This list does not cover every child abuse possibility. You may have seen other things in the child’s behaviour in

circumstances that worry you.

6 Signs

6A The NSPCC lists some of the signs and behaviours which may indicate that a child is being abused:

- repeated minor injuries
- children who are dirty, smelly, poorly clothed or who appear underfed
- children who have lingering illnesses which are not attended to, deterioration in school work, or significant changes in behaviour, aggressive behaviour, severe tantrums
- an air of 'detachment' or a 'don't care' attitude
- overly compliant behaviour
- a 'watchful attitude'
- sexually explicit behaviour (e.g. playing games and showing awareness which is inappropriate for the child's age), continual open masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play
- a child who is reluctant to go home, or is kept away from school for no apparent reason
- does not trust adults, particularly those who are close
- 'tummy pains' with no medical reason
- eating problems, including over-eating, loss of appetite
- disturbed sleep, nightmares, bed wetting
- running away from home, suicide attempts
- self inflicted wounds
- reverting to younger behaviour
- depression, withdrawal
- relationships between child and adults which are secretive and exclude others
- pregnancy

These signs are not evidence themselves; but may be a warning, particularly if a child exhibits several of them or a pattern emerges. It is important to remember that there may be other explanations for a child showing such signs. Abuse is not easy to diagnose, even for experts.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

7A All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect children. Within the Charity the individual trustees named in Section 1 have particular responsibilities.

7B Occasionally a volunteer travelling out to South Africa to help for a period at the school will themselves be under 18. Despite the Charity not having responsibility for such volunteers, if an adult is travelling with them he/she (and the young person) must be made aware of this policy and of the adult's responsibility to keep a supportive eye on the young volunteer. It should also be made clear to both the adult and the young volunteer that in case of any concerns Mrs. Linda Ngamlana is the person to talk to. When appropriate in the case of an incident in South Africa, the volunteer, the Child Protection Officer or the Chairman of the charity may wish to seek the advice of the ex-Principal of the School Mrs Jane Bradshaw, who has the experience, background and aptitude for this. The Chairman of the Charity should in any case be made aware of any situation as soon as is practicable.

7C Confidentiality comes with certain boundaries. It is the statutory obligation of all trustees and volunteers to report disclosures or abuse to the relevant authorities.

8 Welfare

Children and young people trust and depend on adults to protect and safeguard them from harm. It is therefore

our responsibility as adults to report any suspicions or evidence of abuse which may have occurred or is occurring to a young person, whether it is during an activity of the Charity or not, and whether we are filling a formal role as a trustee or volunteer or an informal role anywhere.

9 Procedures if child abuse is suspected

9A The trust's Child Protection Officer will be informed immediately by a trustee or volunteer in the following circumstances:

- Suspicion that a child is being abused.
- Evidence that a child is being abused.
- A complaint being made by a child against a trustee, volunteer or other adult.
- A complaint being made by a child against another child

The Child Protection Officer will keep a full record of reports made and make referrals to child protection agencies if necessary. The Chairman of the Charity will be kept informed at all times.

NB: Identifying and investigating actual child abuse is the responsibility of child protection agencies.

9B Training and Support

The trust will endeavour to arrange suitable training and support for any of its trustees and volunteers, as appropriate to their roles.

9C Professional Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be understood by all those working or helping with children, particularly in the context of child protection. The Charity recognises that the principal purpose of confidentiality in this respect is to benefit the child.

9D Records and Monitoring

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Such records **MUST** be kept securely in line with statutory guidelines for a minimum of forty years. The Charity is clear about the need to record any concerns held about a child or children within its care, the status of such records and when photocopies of these records should be passed over to outside agencies.

9E Attendance at Case Conferences

In the event of the Charity being invited to attend a child protection conference, the Chairman will represent the Charity and provide information relevant to case conferences.

9F Our Role as Trustees and Volunteers

- To keep our eyes and ears open.
- To report any suspicions of child abuse.
- To be excellent adult role models.

9G How to Respond if a Pupil Confides in You

It can take a great deal of courage for a child to talk to an adult about their abuse because the child is 'telling' on someone more powerful than they are. Therefore this should be kept in mind: The child may be having to betray the person who is not only close to them but also loved by them and they are risking a great deal in the hope that you will believe what they say.

9H Helpful Responses

- Remain calm, approachable and receptive. Do not pre-judge.
- Listen carefully, without interrupting.

- Make it clear that you are taking them seriously.
- Acknowledge their courage and good sense and reassure them that they are right to tell you.
- Explain that you cannot keep things a secret but will have to record and pass on what they have said.
- Reassure them that they should not feel guilty and that you're sorry that this has happened to them.
- Let them know that you are going to do everything you can to help them and what may happen as a result of their disclosure.

9I What to avoid

- Do not allow your shock or distaste to show.
 - Do not probe for more information than is offered. You must not ask the child leading questions or attempt to counsel the pupil.
 - Do not speculate or make assumptions.
 - Do not make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
 - Do not make any promises that you cannot keep, such as promising that 'everything will be alright'
 - Do not agree to keep the information a secret. Make it clear, in a sensitive way, that confidentiality cannot be promised to a child disclosing.
 - Never let allegations by a child or young person go unrecorded or unreported including any made against you.
- In all instances the Child Protection Officer must be informed.

Make sure the child knows that the information will be passed on to the Child Protection Officer.

9J What to do next

- You must make an immediate, careful record of what has been said, using the child's actual words wherever possible [not your interpretation of them]. If you record opinions, ensure that these cannot be confused with facts. The written record must be signed and dated.
- Immediately contact the Child Protection Officer. The Child Protection Officer will make a decision based on your report, judging whether the issue should be referred to outside agencies or not. In the absence of the Child Protection Officer the Chairman should be informed.
- Record, in writing, the fact that you have reported the situation to the Child Protection Officer; this is for your own protection.
- Remain caring and supportive to the child.

If you have any doubts about making a report, remember the possible consequences of not reporting, i.e. consequences for both the child and yourself. (Not to report may be construed as neglect of care and therefore itself constitute abuse.)

9K It might happen that you become worried about a child's behaviour or injuries, but the child says nothing to suggest that he/she is being abused. What do you do?

- Be the sort of person a child/young person can talk to.
- Be available and be prepared to listen.
- Discuss your concerns with the Child Protection Officer or a medical professional.
- Do not rely on someone else to take action.

Your role is to:

- Be vigilant and responsible.
- Report accurately and carefully to the Child Protection Officer.
- Support the pupil by being supportive.
- **No more is required of you**

9L Sharing concerns with parents

Generally this is to be encouraged, but in cases that may come under the child protection umbrella such sharing

of concerns will be done by the Child Protection Officer after discussion with the concerned trustee or volunteer. [If, after having discussed a concern you might have about a child with his/her parents/guardians, you may remain concerned, the issue may be a child protection one and should be reported immediately.]

9M When is it not appropriate to share concerns with parents?

Do not share concerns with parents if you believe that you may put the child at greater risk, or if you suspect that abuse is occurring for which they appear to be responsible. Under these circumstances report immediately to the Child Protection Officer.

9N What happens next?

Once you have reported a concern to the Child Protection Officer and that officer has made a decision about the status of the concern, whether it is a child protection issue or not, no decision will be taken independently. A referral may be made by the Child Protection Officer or the Chairman. All further responsibility for gathering information and deciding what happens next will rest primarily with social services. In some cases, a brief assessment might reveal the child to have needs which can be met by providing specific support. In other more serious cases, the information provided to agencies by the Child Protection Officer will trigger a full child protection investigation. Social Services will not normally report back to the trust should any referrals be made to them.

10 Safety

- The Charity must ensure that its activities take place in a clean and safe environment for children and young people and that all trustees and volunteers in such circumstances have up to date CRB clearance.
- All trustees and volunteers must have an up to date copy of the Safeguarding Children Policy and know who the Child Protection Officer is.
- The Charity will make reasonable endeavours to ensure that all accidents are recorded in the accident book.
- The Charity must make reasonable endeavours to ensure that it has an accurate and up-to-date database detailing contact numbers and medical information. These databases are confidential and stored safely.
- The Charity must make reasonable endeavours to ensure that there are regular safety audits of all equipment [first aid kits, fire extinguishers, telephones etc.] and must practise any fire drills for the premises in which activities take place.
- The Charity must make reasonable endeavours to ensure that a responsible adult is on site when children arrive and ensure the full safety of children whilst on site.

11 Recruitment, general supervision and code of conduct.

- When recruiting trustees or volunteers the Charity must ensure all appropriate checks are made. The Charity has a right to decline offers of help from volunteers.
- The Charity must keep a careful check on all visitors and guests at events, whether their visit is by invitation or unsolicited.
- The Charity must make reasonable endeavours to ensure that there are sufficient trustees/volunteers and of an appropriate male/female balance to run all activities.
- Each trustee or volunteer must be an adult role model for children and young people: always being courteous, friendly and kind. No trustee or volunteer should make suggestive or discriminatory comments.
- All trustees and volunteers should respect children and young people at all times regardless of their sex, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation.
- No trustee or volunteer must ever allow or engage in inappropriate verbal or physical contact of any description. It is easy for certain types of behaviour to be misinterpreted.
- All trustees and volunteers should be firm and fair with children. Favouritism should be avoided, as should singling out troublemakers. All trustees and volunteers should keep in mind the distinction between bad behav-

our and the child exhibiting unacceptable behaviour.

- No trustee or volunteer should allow children/young people or adults to engage in abusive activities such as initiation rites, ridiculing or bullying.
- All trustees and volunteer should redirect excessive attention-seeking behaviour into positive activity where possible.
- The Charity must develop an ethos that allows trustees and volunteers to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out any inappropriate attitudes or behaviour to each other.
- The Charity must encourage children and young people to trust their own feelings about adult behaviour and to assert their right to determine (within sensible limits) the behaviour with which they are comfortable.
- All trustees and volunteers should avoid unobserved one-to-one contact with a child or young person. When such a situation is unavoidable, the door must be left open and a colleague must be within sight and hearing.
- No male trustee or volunteer may enter an all female room/dressing room etc. or vice versa.
- All trustees and volunteer should report disclosures or concerns to the child protection officer/designated trustee.
- Trustees and volunteers should never trivialise child abuse issues.
- No trustee or volunteer should drive or walk a young person home on their own unless the circumstances are exceptional. No trustee or volunteer should ever take a young person to their home. In any one-to-one situation that is not clear and a proper part of your work you put yourself at risk of false allegations.
- Trustees and volunteers should be extremely careful about giving personal mobile telephone numbers or e-mail addresses to young people however valid the reason. This is viewed by the Charity to be inappropriate behaviour on the part of trustees or volunteers, and parents should be contacted direct if messages need to be passed on to their children. Trustees or volunteers may put themselves at risk of false allegations.

12 Dealing with allegations of abuse against a trustee or volunteer

12A It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a trustee/volunteer is dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. It may be that the trustee or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to the child or has behaved towards the child/children in a way that indicates that he/she is unsuitable to work with children.

12B All trustees and volunteers should understand what to do if they receive an allegation against another person or if they have concerns about another trustee or volunteer.

All allegations must be reported straightaway normally to the chairman. If the complaint is about the Chairman then a report has to be made to two other trustees. The Chairman, or those other trustees, must pass on the allegations to the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer (within the social services department) depending on the locality in which the incident is alleged to have taken place. The LADO has first to discuss the allegation with the Chairman or other trustees to confirm details of the allegation and establish that it is not demonstrably unfounded or false. The Chairman or other trustees should inform the accused person about the allegation as soon as possible after consulting the LADO but not until agencies such as the police /social care have been involved if appropriate.

12C There could be three strands to any investigation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social workers are about whether a child is in need of protection /services
- Consideration of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

12D Parents /carers of the child/ren involved need to be informed - unless they are already aware of the situa-

tion. This would require a thoughtful and sensitive approach. They need to be kept informed of the outcome of the case where there is not a criminal prosecution including the outcome of any disciplinary process. The child/ren concerned may need care or support from the police or social services.

12E The Charity must keep the person who is the subject of allegations informed of the progress of the case and consider what support might be appropriate for that individual. If a resignation is tendered then this does not prevent an allegation being followed up. A conclusion must be sought and the person against whom the allegation is made must be given every opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it. Similarly a compromise agreement does not negate the responsibility of the safeguarding professionals to seek a conclusion to the allegation. The Local Authority Designated Officer should be informed of any allegations made directly to the police.

13 Conclusions and key points

- If you are concerned about a child or young person, or suspect that abuse is taking place, it is your statutory duty to act on it by reporting as directed here.
- You must always report your concerns immediately, whether this is inappropriate adult behaviour, a false allegation, a disclosure from a child or merely that you have concerns about a child. Never wait to ‘see what happens’ (your concerns may corroborate concerns that other colleagues may have reported.)
- Never question a pupil or try to investigate yourself. You could prejudice a case by probing for more information than is given. If an investigation is necessary it will be handled by child protection professionals.
- As soon as possible after any relevant conversation or incident, write a comprehensive report of what happened, giving dates, times, locations and names, and as far as possible using informants’ own words. This should be forwarded promptly to the safeguarding officer and to the Chairman.
- Ensure that your own behaviour is appropriate at all times and never believe that ‘it won’t happen to me’.
- Make sure you have in your possession a copy of the Charity’s Safeguarding Children Policy and that you are well acquainted with its contents. This is a requirement.

Appendix to be added

Advice for volunteers who anticipate helping with children at the Amasango Career School in Grahamstown, South Africa.

Author: Martin Coombs

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References: